

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing an interface to a data storage system, the method comprising  
5 the steps of:
  - defining parameters of a volume within the data storage system having a plurality of storage devices;
  - creating, in the data storage system, the volume from the parameters when there are storage devices associated with the volume, and when there are no storage devices  
10 associated with the volume;
  - providing the volume as an area of available data storage space in the data storage system to a computing device which is external to the data storage system, the volume of storage accessible with an associated identifier, wherein the area of available data storage space provided as the volume to the computing device is greater than an actual area of  
15 available data storage space provided by actual storage devices associated with the volume;
  - receiving, from the computing device which is external to the data storage system, a request for access, via the associated identifier, to the volume, the computing device providing the request requiring an amount of data storage in the volume that is greater  
20 than the actual area of available data storage space provided by actual storage devices associated with the volume; and
  - responding to the request in a manner that satisfies proper operation of the request in the computing device providing the request such that the computing device providing the request perceives that the amount of data storage in the volume is greater than the  
25 actual area of available data storage space provided by actual storage devices associated with the volume.